

SUPER BOWL Chronicles —the Sequel

The Saga Continues



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"Hello my four-legged friends," *Benchwarmer Sports'* Wynn Voeks emailed the twins days before the NFC Championship Packers-Seahawks game. "Are you planning to have another Seattle Super Bowl experience?"

Following the Seahawks Super Bowl XLVIII win (see *Super*

Bowl Chronicles), the twins had visions of Super Bowl XLIX-bound inflatable horses prancing in their heads as it was to be held in Phoenix, a place they had wanted to visit.

All it would take would be another easy NFC Conference Championship for the Seahawks — that is, two goal line stances, successful fake field goal touchdown, two TDs in waning minutes, onside kick recovery, two-point conversion, winning the coin toss, marching down the field for an overtime victory. Easy schmeasy.



BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN. SUPER BOWL XLIX WITH HAWKS' EYE VIEW.

Seconds after Jermaine Kearse caught the game-winning pass — pausing only for quick tears and awkward mistimed chest bumps — Sandy phoned Wynn to book their tickets. They really didn't think it was possible for Super Bowl lightning to strike twice for them. Sure, the Seahawks were Super Bowl-return worthy (despite a few hiccups in mid-season), but thanks to some Christmas money coming from Mom (to whom they would dedicate this trip), places to stay (their mom's sister, Pat, and their good friends Julie and Mark) and some

Cont.'d



ABOVE: JOHNNY, MARTY AND ROBIN GET LUCKY WITH THE TWINS. (SEE PAST CHRONICLES); SECOND FROM RIGHT: TWINS GET LUCKY WITH WYNN. FAR RIGHT: SHARON GETS LUCKY IN MILE HIGH CLUB.

rainy day savings, the two were able to cobble together enough money for just one more Seattle Super Bowl experience.

"Yep. Your four-legged friends are coming," Sandy warned, er, told Wynn.

□

"Okay," Sandy said. "I paid for the flights and the game tickets. You are okay with buying everything else right? Our food, souvenirs, gifts and other things?"

"Absolutely," Sharon said as she passed through Victoria airport security. "I've got this (indicating she would spare no expense in bucking up for her side of the deal)".

"Um. Sandy?" Sharon meekly said as she rifled through her wallet looking for her VISA to pay for the flight snacks. "You are going to kill

me, but I think I left my credit card at home."

"She's got this, my foot," Sandy silently fumed as she gave her MasterCard to the cashier. "Can I get a receipt for that?" Sandy asked, neatly folding and pocketing the paper evidence of Sharon's part of the bargain — a pile of receipts that would grow Sandy's wallet to rival that of George Costanza.¹

A major snowstorm in New England and an over-taxed Phoenix airport trying to accommodate a major influx of football and Phoenix Open golf fans meant a three-hour wait in the Victoria airport. Sandy, as she often does, used this opportunity

to get to know anybody that looked remotely like being Phoenix-bound, to tell their tales of their first Super Bowl experience.

Her first victims, er, new friends were a group of high-spirited, testosterone-charged Seahawk fans who turned the tables on her and boasted about their media appearance — a short interview with CHEK TV at the 12th Man Flag Raising at Victoria's Inner Harbour the previous day.

"Oh, CHEK interviewed us too," Sandy modestly piped up.

"At the flag-raising," one of the guys asked.

"No," Sandy said. "At their studio." (see *Far More Famous* p. 24)

"Wait until they see the front page Times Colonist photo," Sharon said

1. Requisite Seinfeld reference.



(ABOVE CLOCKWISE) AGAIN, THE PAPARAZZI FOLLOWED THEM; BUILDINGS AS BILLBOARDS AND SHARON'S EX (PACKERS CLAY MATTHEWS) ON STAGE.

when Sandy told her how quickly—faster than a Patriots football—their egos seemed to deflate.

Happy Trails, Again

After collecting their NFL Experience tickets from Wynn (their two-legged *Benchwarmer Sports* friend) and a quick but warm exchange of hugs in a downtown hotel, Sandy and Sharon set off for the pre-Game Day festivities. Again, the call for duty rang as the twins meticulously smoothed out their

malleable ensemble and inserted respective human limbs into corresponding equine ones.

“Ride ‘em, Cowboy,” Sandy said as she switched on the inflate button. As the costumes sprang to life, the two ‘she-horses’ self-lassoed themselves as the intricacies associated with reworking their horses into this year’s Super Bowl theme gave way to a tangled mess. Last year, “breaking Broncos” gave instant rationale and relevance to bringing the inflatable fun to Broadway. But this year, as neither

the equinely-named Broncos or Colts had made it to Super Bowl XLIX as AFC champions, it didn’t make horse sense to bring their complete Super Bowl XLVIII ensemble to Phoenix — not that making sense ever stopped the twins from doing anything.

But as is often the case with the twins, timing was everything and making inflatable fun of the Patriots played right into their hands. Two weeks earlier, the New England Patriots were accused of tampering with pounds-per-



square-inch (PSI) requirements of footballs used in the Indianapolis Colts-New England Patriots AFC championship game. The NFL launched an independent investigation (still as of March 2015 underway) for the so-called “Deflate-Gate,” dubbed in reverence to Spy-Gate, a 2007 incident where the Patriots were disciplined by the league for videotaping New York Jets’ defensive coaches’ signals during a game.

“If you tie the string from each side of the back sign to the front sign it’s like a sandwich board,” Sharon showed Sandy as she fashioned her *“Yeah, Yeah, Yeah we know, Our Horses are Fully Inflated”* signs over her shoulders.

“But they keep slipping,” Sandy said as she mounted, er, affixed

her *“...and We’re Keeping Them Away from Tom Brady”* signs. “Try hanging them like necklaces.”

“...but that chokes,” Sharon gasped. The two, strangled and tangled, struggled for the next 20 minutes trying to keep the sign strings, camera case cord, lanyards, knapsack rigging and horse reins from coiling them into human spools. But it was worth the entangled resourcefulness. Again, the twins with their inflated horses poking deflated-ball humour attracted media and football enthusiasts’ attention — even from Patriot fans who by this time were most likely Deflate-Gate weary.

The unseasonably grey skies unsuccessfully threatened to dampen the fun. The pre-Game festivities — Super Bowl Central

— transformed a 12-city block network of downtown Phoenix blocks into a street party. The centrepiece was *The Grand Canyon Experience*, where adventure-seekers climbed like spiders up a 30-foot high rock wall that towered over a crush of fans inching like centipedes under the shadows of a *Pepsi Hyped for Halftime Stage* and iconic giant XLIX Roman numerals.

With buildings instead of billboards sporting promotional signs, it lacked the magnificent brilliance of last year’s Super Bowl Boulevard celebrations in Times Square. But any venue outside the Big Apple would. Still, the Phoenix and suburban communities — Glendale and Scottsdale — spread Super Bowl cheer across the region.



The week-long celebrations started and ended at the University of Phoenix stadium with the Pro Bowl and Super Bowl as bookends to festivals, the NFL Honours Awards, exhibits, Media Day and a score of community celebrations and events. The football festivities also co-starred with the Phoenix Open, a PGA tour milestone that stubbornly takes place annually during Super Bowl week. With more than 600,000 spectators over the seven-day event, it is the best-attended golf tournament in the world. It is also called the “Greenest Show on Earth” backed by the unlikeliest of title sponsors, Waste Management. Together, the two sport titans brought an estimated more than \$1.5 billion into the local economy.

Horse Play

Super Bowl XLIX’s indoor showpiece was the NFL Experience — a football theme park spilling onto more than 850,000 square feet over three floors of the new Phoenix Convention Center. Adults scrambled like pre-schoolers to check out the exhibits featuring interactive displays, autograph sessions, a Vince Lombardi Trophy exhibit, a NFL Draft stage, NFL’s *Play 60* (physical activity program) games and a variety of photo ops. The twins’ favourite, however, was the NFL Scouting Combine where they showed off their inflated horsepower in the 40-yard dash against some little kid (who of course, beat them). While the little boy’s father captured the horse race (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWzeH_w8ILs), the video

footage didn’t catch Sharon’s (Marshawn) Lynch-like touchdown back flip, crotch-grabbing (the horse’s) theatrics.

Once again, the twin-horses were stopped for photo-ops and paparazzi — dozens of fans, both Seahawks and Patriots, police officers, volunteers, visitors and residents as well as two NBC news crews, a UK television crew, Mexican and others snapped or rolled cameras.

One of the NFL Experience volunteers — who took about a dozen photos of them — directed the twins to a Paul Allen-hosted (Seahawks’ billionaire owner and co-founder of Microsoft) 12s fan fest at Chase Stadium, a few blocks from the convention centre.



SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO RECOGNIZED THE TWINS FROM PREVIOUS SIGHTINGS. THESE PATRIOT FANS (FAR RIGHT) ONLY FOUND OUT THE MORNING OF THE GAME THAT THEIR TICKETS BOOKED THROUGH A BIG-NAMED RESELLER HAD APPEARED.

“They will love you guys,” the overly-enthusiastic — but incredibly kind — elderly volunteer said. “They’ll eat you up.”

Because the party was scheduled to end in the next 20 minutes, the twins quickly sauntered to the stadium. They arrived to an overcrowded bar on the outskirts of the stadium — one with a line-up and a \$20 cover charge.

Despite having their own NFL team (the Arizona Cardinals) it was not unusual for Phoenix area bars to be swathed with Seahawk blue-and-green instead of hometown red. As is the case in the Pacific Northwest and around the world, the Seahawks had a huge following in Cardinal country. More than a few local bars even declared themselves Hawks Nests, inviting 12s to party

and watch the Seahawks play throughout the NFL season. And with 12s outnumbering Patriots at least two to one that week, many more watering holes within Super Bowl fan-reach, catered exclusively to Seahawk fans — some, as one woman told the twins, charging as much as \$1,000 to get in the door.

Even \$20 seemed a bit excessive to charge for the chance to spend even more money on food and drink, so the twins passed and carried on through the outside activities. The twins later suspected that the 12s party was elsewhere in the facility — another missed opportunity (see David Letterman, *Super Bowl Chronicles*) for another iconic encounter.

“Paul Allen will be disappointed that he didn’t get the chance to

take his picture with us,” Sandy said.

“His loss,” Sharon sighed, knowing that the team owner’s biggest regret would be the twin’s decision to pass.

□

Timing again proved propitious as the late afternoon crowds thickened, making line-ups longer and safe inflatable passage even more congested.

They returned to the outdoor stage area where the assembled sea of football groupies were beginning to get overly saturated — a human tide of fans ebbing and flowing through the flood of attractions. It was a steady stream of giraffe-wannabes, stretching their necks to see if the bordering attractions were worth risking life and limb to get a closer look.



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) THE TWINS AND THEIR HORSES TAKE TRANSIT (DRIVER FELT SORRY FOR THEM AND GAVE THEM A FREE RIDE); SHARON CHECKS OUT HER NEW HAWK RIDE; AND YOU CAN TAKE A HORSE TO WATER AND MAKE HIM DRINK.

The horses were also getting a bit trampled in the biped stampede. At times, people in front of the twins would feel a gentle puffy nudge and turn irritably only to find a comical cartoonish inflated snout (the horse's, not the twins') and their peevish impatience would quickly spread into an amused grin.

By early evening, the twins had enough horse play and fun mingling with the masses so started to head back to Aunt Pat's in Scottsdale. The horses had had enough as well. Sandy's had actually started to collapse, the head drooping a bit in deflated defeat.

"Ironic, right?" Sandy said as she jiggled with the battery cord which had seemed to have short-circuited.

As they headed to Phoenix's Sky Train (at \$2 for a day pass probably the best deal in North America —and certainly during Super Bowl week), they came across the annual NFL Honors Awards being hosted at the convention centre. It was a red-carpet type affair with caravans of oversized limos carrying colossally-sized football stars — both current and past: Texans defensive star J.J. Watt, Steeler great Jerome "the Bus" Bettis, Packers QB Aaron Rodgers, Cardinals wide receiver



Larry Fitzgerald. Of course, the twins being height-challenged could not see over the crowds or the red carpet grandstand, but from the cheers could tell that noise levels were synced to the status of those being stretched out of the limos.

A Chronicle Following...

"Where are your horses?" a friendly Washington Stater asked the twins as they entered the hotel.



SANDY'S NEW JOBS. IN THE DRAUGHT LINE-UP AND LINED UP FOR THE DRAFT.



This Marriott Inn Residence in Glendale was *Benchwarmer Sports'* Super Bowl package hotel.

The twins thought that the fellow Seahawk fan might have recognized them from the day before or from New York — as many had.

"You're the two from *The Chronicles*," he gushed.

Wynn — whether he liked it or not — moved over to the dark side last year when the twins added him to the *Chronicles'* email distribution list. Halfway through reading the *Super Bowl Chronicles*, he emailed Sharon asking her if he could post the twin tales on the *Benchwarmer Sports* site.

"In the 25 years of doing business and the thousands of clients we've had, I've never met anyone as

memorable as you too," he emailed.

"That's a compliment, right?" Sandy thought.

"Well, you strap on an inflatable horse and people are going to remember you," Sharon thought as she emailed him back the okay to post. The *Super Bowl Chronicles* unwittingly became not only a twin tale, but their testimonial.

"I was on the edge wavering between a few companies," the Seahawk fan continued, speaking to the twins. "And then I read the *Chronicles* and knew the company would be legit and the tickets would come through."

It was a legitimate concern, and why Sandy and Sharon avoided the "Vinnies on Craigslist" (see *Super Bowl Chronicles*) and booked with Wynn. And this year, getting

legitimate — or any — Super Bowl tickets was even more risky. The twins had heard horror stories in the media and from people at the game about Super Bowl XLIX tickets. Hundreds of fans had arrived in Phoenix without knowing until game time that they had the ticket they paid for. Some had been offered \$10,000 (a so-called 200% guarantee) to buy back tickets that brokers couldn't secure; others had their ticket package seller or broker completely walk away and cancel deals.

Partly to blame was over-inflated prices. Ticket prices had been rising for years — and even the cheapest seats started selling weeks before at \$2500 to \$3000. But the tipping point which made this year different from others was



SHARON'S NEW JOBS—
PREACHING TO THE CHOIR
AND CHATTING IT UP WITH
MEXICAN TV.

the scarcity of tickets in a “speculative market.” Tickets are typically distributed and/or sold to sponsors, host teams and the two Super Bowl teams with the remainder spread through the other 30 NFL teams. Unused tickets are resold to resellers or ticket brokers. Many of these sellers “over sell” (promising tickets to their clients) and wait for desperate sellers offering significant discounts in the last week before Super Bowl. This year, these “fire sales” didn’t materialize, leaving resellers scrambling. And some ticket holders — who in previous years may have sold tickets to brokers or re-sale companies, kept them, knowing that they could get thousands of dollars more for their

ticket by selling directly to those who would pony up the big bucks — thereby artificially inflating the market even more so.

Benchwarmers Sports, however, as they always had, made good on every commitment, honouring tickets for every one of its customers even though the circumstances this year didn’t make it their most profitable experience.

“We don’t have a 200% guarantee,” Wynn had told the twins the day before when they were talking about the ticket

situation. “We have contracts with companies — and we want our clients to have the best experience.” (Wynn thankfully had actually advised the twins to lock into buying tickets the day after the NFC Championships as he had predicted a shortage and that ticket prices would go up, not down).

It was an unfortunate situation and one which the twins hoped the NFL would crack down on as not only were solid tour package companies like *Benchwarmers* feeling the hit, but so too were host communities who had



SCENES FROM THE FIELD. FAR LEFT: THIS MAN HAD GONE TO EVERY SUPER BOWL; CENTRE: THE FRIGHT “FRO” (AND YES, IT’S REAL); MORE FLAG-WAVING AND A-ROD IN THE “CHEAP SEATS.”

worked so hard to put on the event only to have visitors left with a bad experience or their tourist dollars spent on ridiculously priced tickets.

"I hope you don't mind sitting lower in the end zone," Wynn said, handing the twins their two tickets.

"I'll sit anywhere," Sharon thought as she hopped on the bus. She was just thrilled to be able to have another Seahawk Super Bowl experience.

"Yes, the end zone is fine," Sandy thought as she grabbed the tickets, unseen, from Wynn.

It was only after the two were seated on the bus with their

reading glasses on, that they realized their "Wynn-fall."

"Row SEVEN," Sandy silently screamed, not wanting to bring attention to their surprise.

"That's ROW SEVEN from the field — not row seven from the rafters!!!" Sharon mouthed, turning jubilantly to Sandy.

Wynn obviously wanted his four-legged friends to have another exceptional experience, but little did he know — or did they know — just how much and how close lightning would strike twice.



The bus ride to the stadium gave the twins one of the best opportunities to see the local backdrop. As in New York, it was strangely foggy, but as the haze



lifted, it uncovered a patchwork quilt of the region's more than 400 golf courses — lush green manicured grass knitted together with stretches of sprawling suburban shopping malls and gated community hamlets. For effect, the communities are interrupted by splashes of barren terra cotta desert sands, tree-less crimson mountains and succulent cacti — a scene that



looked like the *Bugs Bunny-Road Runner Hour* brought to life. With mild winters and dry summers, it was like Heaven’s waiting room for the scores of retirees and Canadian snowbirds that made Phoenix and adjacent exurbias home or vacation spots.

Pre-Game Jitters

The oddly-named University of Phoenix Stadium — as the university doesn’t have a football team or intercollegiate sports of any kind — is designed in tribute to, and plops down like a barrel cactus in the desert sands of Glendale, a suburb about 40 minutes west of Phoenix. Built in 2006, the 63,000 (expandable to more than 70,000) seat stadium is home to the NFL’s Arizona Cardinals and the annual collegiate football Fiesta Bowl. It has a

retractable roof which strangely enough despite spectacular weather, was closed for all of the Cardinals games this year.

Super Bowl or not, there’s something about walking into a NFL stadium that is more intense than any other sporting event, particularly when under the network TV glare. The colours seem brighter — the Arizona Cardinal red bleeding deeper into the bleacher seats and stadium walls, almost in defiance, unfazed by the two blue-dominated colours of the Seahawks and Patriots uniforms and the purple and orange brazen colour palette of Phoenix’s Super Bowl theme.

The field also seemed larger (especially from row seven!) and 3D couldn’t describe the



GEARING UP FOR THE GAME: RUSSELL WILSON HEADING OUT THE TUNNEL; MARSHAWN LYNCH...TWIN 1 AND TWIN 2 GETTING THEIR GAME FACES ON.



HALFTIME AT SUPER BOWL XLIX — KATY PERRY ROARING INTO THE STADIUM AND DANCING WITH DARK HORSES.

dimensions of each player, each fan, every sign or figure gracing the stadium — the sights, the sounds, the corn-flake smell of American beer and the sweet oil and onion stench of bloated hotdogs, providing a multi-dimensional experience for everyone being treated to a bleacher eye's view.

This was not lost on the twins, who again were experiencing something they never thought they could — their Seahawks, themselves, smacked right into a Super Bowl, not once, but twice.

While the temperature was polar opposites — New York's crisp cold versus Phoenix's dry heat — the pageantry and the clear open sky of both Super Bowls were the same. The only thing missing at

the University of Phoenix Stadium was the swag.

"Nothing!!! Not a thing. Not even a freaking towel," Sandy hissed as she scanned the swag-swept-and-less seats. "You get more at a bloody exhibition game!"

The twins were doubly upset as the souvenir offerings at Macy's and the NFL Pro Shop kiosks were equally sparse.

"Man, our friends aren't getting much this time," Sharon sulked as she grabbed an overpriced used plastic Budweiser Super Bowl-logo beer cup that she found abandoned in a cup holder. "With the freaking steep ticket prices you'd think they could spring for something," she said scouring under the seats to see if anything else went unclaimed.

Family Reunion — Fluke or Fate?

Enigma. That's the word to describe the lynchpin of the Seahawks' offence — running back Marshawn Lynch. He appears to thrive on quirky individuality, but is the consummate team player. He's the Greta Garbo of the NFL, most famous for attracting attention from trying to avoid it. At the Media Day earlier in the week, he answered every media question with "I'm only here so I don't get fined."

While all his team mates were warming up on the field doing drills and loosening up, he walked stoically around the inside perimeter of the stadium, ostensibly marking his territory,



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SHARON REUNITES WITH HER IN-LAWS; WITH DEVON; DOUGIE B. RIGHT AFTER ACKNOWLEDGING THE TWINS.

He was shrouded behind oversized headphones and an Hannibal Lecter-like oxygen mask, indifferent to the line of media cameras parading behind him. It was classic Beast Mode.

At first, the twins also were a bit disappointed that they were behind the Patriots' end zone. They thought they would miss everything — a misgiving that would ultimately prove unwarranted.

"Darn, the Seahawks' tunnel is at the other end," Sandy said. "We'll miss seeing them."

Their disappointment was without merit. Right then, right there

before them, Dougie B. — the Seahawks' wide receiver Doug Baldwin and Sharon's "luv-er" (see *Jack Knox article, page 22*) was a restraining order distance in front of them warming up. He stopped and turned towards the section next to the twins, touched his mouth with his fist and pointed to the stands.

"Who the heck is that?" Sharon thought, jealously looking to see who he was blowing kisses to.

Up in the stands, sat a couple — a guy and a Filipino woman.

"Hey," I think that's Cindy Baldwin," Sharon squealed, referring to Dougie B's mom, the



woman the twins had met in New York (keep reading *Jack Knox's column*).

The twins, all set for another family reunion, excitedly ran up the stairs and towards the next section.

"Cindy?" Sharon said as she approached the woman. "Cindy" didn't show recognition.

"Oh sorry," Sandy said. "You look like someone we know."

"Man, she sure looked like Cindy Baldwin," Sandy said. "But we should have known as she wasn't wearing a Seahawks jersey."

A disheartened Sharon agreed, but as she made her way back up the stairs to go back to their seats, looked over and in the next section saw a whole row of Seahawk jersey-wearing, #89-emblazoned fans.

"Oh my Gawd," Sharon gasped as she grabbed her sister to take pursuit. "There they are!"

Sure enough, there they were — Cindy (Sharon's future mother-in-law), Doug's uncle, his maternal grandmother and a few cousins or friends.

"Hey, we saw you two heading down to your seats," the Uncle smiled at Sandy, as Sharon greeted Cindy, giving her a big hug.

"Hey it's the twins," Cindy said. "The girls with the horses."

Sharon looked at the Baldwins, sitting anxiously but in proud anticipation like family watching a child's first school play.



LEGION OF BOOM AND D-LINE GET JIGGY WITH IT BEFORE THE GAME.

"Can you believe this is happening again?" she asked. "How great is this?"

The Baldwins sighed and nodded, all seeming to pause to reflect on the moment. Looking at them it became clearly apparent that the grown men on the field — the professional athletes, with larger-than-life paycheques and personas — were all sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, cousins, friends or otherwise with families and friends who no matter what the day would bring, would share the anguish and elation just as they have done through all aspects and times of their lives.

It was this kind of inspiration and encouragement that also blessed the twins. Whether Ironmans, epic bike trips or graduations (including Sandy's dog from his anger management class), their Mom and Dad were front and centre. And their love and support were given and received through their lives which at times, faced great trauma and adversity.

"Where's Devon?" Sharon asked Cindy.

"He's down at the rail," Cindy said.

Sure enough, Dougie B's little brother was clamouring with unbridled pride and excitement over the grandstand rail watching his big brother warm up.



"Hey, Devon," Sharon said as she tapped him on the shoulder.

"Remember me?"

"Hey, it's the twins," he smiled widely, and patiently and amicably posed for a few photos before eagerly turning his attention back to the field.

"They are SO nice," Sandy said as they headed back to their seats.

"And it's so cool that the Uncle recognized us heading to our seats."

"Yeah, that was so cool," Sharon agreed. She only wished that she had remembered to get Devon to sign her jersey — something she had intended to do if she ever met him again.

The twins stopped to chat again to another row of 12s. Sandy again

apologized to one of them who she had earlier found by grabbing his hair and tugging, found that his blue-dyed fright wig wasn't so frightful. It was real.

"We just met the Baldwins again!" Sandy told them, excited about their celebrity sighting. She had told them all about their experiences at last year's Super Bowl.

"Well, there's A-Rod," one of the guys motioned, pointing to the next section.

There sitting at the top of level 100 at the far corner of the end zone was the Yankees superstar player Alex Rodriguez, rested and relaxed after a steroid-induced year-long suspension.

"My gawd," Sandy exclaimed when they returned to their seats. "We have better seats than A-Rod...and the Baldwins!" An acknowledgement she would gush every time the mammoth jumbotron would flash a celebrity — Chris Pratt, Anna Faris, Jamie Foxx, Chris Evans...

A few minutes after they sat down again, they noticed that Dougie B. was still warming up at their end of the field. They both stood up, Sharon waving their Canadian flag, Sandy pointing to her #89 jersey, both trying to get his attention. Their efforts proved successful. He stopped, looked up, bumped his fist against his mouth, then to his chest and then pointed to the girls.

"Did that actually happen?" the twins looked at each other, each trying to confirm that what they thought they saw was *what* they saw. They then both looked around to ensure that the acknowledgement was indeed directed to them and yep, they were the only #89-wearing Seahawk fans in the vicinity.

"Oh my gawd," Sandy beamed. "He's pointing to his number!"

"OH my gawd," Sharon beamed. "He's pointing to his heart!"



As it got closer to game time, the stands filled to their brim. So did Sandy's bladder.

"I gotta go again," Sandy said as she left Sharon still swooning in the stands after Dougie B's sweet acknowledgement.

Sandy got to the 100-level concourse only to find it filled shoulder-to-shoulder with a confused maze of people making their way to their seats, concession lines or washrooms.

"Oh no, I really have to go," Sandy sighed to no one in particular as she hit a human logjam to the women's restroom.

"I feel your pain," said a tall guy standing in front of her, noticing her agonizing anguish.

"No worries. I'll help you," he said, grabbing her hand and pulling her like a rag doll through the crowd.

"MAKE WAY," he shouted.

"Coming through..." he said in the most authoritative of voices.

Like a shark fin they cut proficiently through the crowd, him yelling, her giggling. And then with one last big push, yards away from the women's restroom he shouted. "Outta the way, my wife's PREGNANT!"

Mission accomplished, and Sandy doubled in laughter and bladder distress, thanked her knight in shining humour.

The Longest Yard

The game was super exciting with most of the action (and thankfully not the last 30 seconds) happening right in front of the twins' Seahawks-eye view of the Patriots end zone.

RICHARD
SHERMAN'S
EXPRESSION
SAYS IT ALL.
THE GAME
ENDED
ABRUPTLY,
DASHING
DREAMS OF A
SUPER BOWL
REPEAT.

A neutral fan of Katy Perry's, the twins held no expectations for the half time show. It was, however, one of the most spectacular half-time shows ever. Singing "*Roar*" and perched atop a gigantic fiery-eyed mechanical metallic lion, she made a dramatic entrance, riding it through a field of flowing orbs as it prowled its way towards the stage. The rest of the performance featured cartoonish beach balls, inflatable dancing sharks (one with terrible rhythm), surfboards, palm trees, some weird Wizard of Oz tin man castoffs (which were actually chess pieces punctuating her "*Dark Horse*"), and of course the requisite Tinkerbell exit amidst fireworks that accompanied her song "*Fireworks*". The theatrics clearly outperformed Perry, her voice outstripped by the pageantry and overtaken by Missy Elliott who stole the stage. Perry's "*I Kissed a Girl*" featured Lenny



COLOURS OF THE NIGHT — UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX STADIUM IN NEON SPLENDOR.

Kravitz, but sadly not enough as the rocker guitarist left the stage as quickly as he arrived.

The game ending — well, it was literally *The Longest Yard*. Seahawk Coach Carroll's decision to pass on second down on the one-yard line, instead of giving the ball to Marshawn Lynch would haunt the team and its fans through a nightmare of dissection in the weeks and months to come. In retrospective, with no time to run three plays and with the matchups on the field, it made sense to pass. It also made sense not to. But whatever rationality could have been later infused into that play, it certainly was a shocking end to an electrifying game. With a collective swish sound of hopes of a second straight Super Bowl victory deflated, the shocked silence of the Seahawk fans crushingly

overpowered the staggered cheers of the Patriots fans. No one was quite sure of what had just happened — even the confetti-cannon launcher must have had his finger primed on the blue-and-green blast trigger. It was an inexplicable and unpredictable finish — but one almost apropos to the Seahawks' and the NFL seasons as nothing that year had seemed to follow the game plan.

For Seahawk fans, the walk back to the bus was unreasonably long and cruel. The anticipation and excitement that had brought them to the stadium four or five hours earlier evaporated as they struggled to come to terms with what had just transpired. Some fans were quiet in stunned and sombre disbelief, others were more outspoken in distress, punishing the silence with shouts of angst.

"They have the best running back in the league — he could have walked it in." "Why did they throw?!"

The loss stung just as sharply as it had for Denver fans in Super Bowl XLVIII—though last year, they had seen the storm coming. That's football. Had Malcolm Butler not made the interception, had the pass been completed or dropped, Bill Belichick might have been the goat for not taking a time out on the previous play. Seattle could have scored and the Patriots could have tied it up like Green Bay did in the NFC championships. A lot of second-guessing, but the real shame was that this one play could define a spectacular Super Bowl and another remarkable season for the Seahawks. Again, Seattle was top seed, and again they were playing the AFC's top seed.

“You guys really won that game,” a Patriots fan told Sandy. It was a classy thing to say, and despite how the twins felt about the New England team (they and their FLFTWOB² friends simply hated the team), for the most part, there is an unspoken respect amongst opposing teams’ fans.

When the twins got to their bus, they were greeted by a gregarious Seahawk fan from the other *Benchwarmer Sports*-chartered bus.

“I’ve been looking for you two,” she said. The twins weren’t surprised as Wynn had earlier told Sandy that someone at the *Benchwarmer Sports* tail-gating party had asked him if the twins with the horses were coming.

“I’m Kimmie from Montana,” she enthused. “And I’m a (fraternal) twin too. When I read your *Chronicles* I just knew I had to go to a Super Bowl and have a twin Super Bowl experience.”

After a few pictures and “I’ve cycled through Montana” (both of the twins had) exchanges, Sandy and Sharon got back to their seats on the bus. There was a bit of a

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wait as Patriots’ fans were still rejoicing in their team’s victory, so Sandy launched back into her entertaining the troops’ mode, getting to know the others on the bus.

“Which team did you cheer for?” Sandy, flopping and dangling her body over her seat rest, asked the man sitting by himself behind them. He wasn’t wearing either of the two teams’ jersey or their colours.

“Neither,” he said. “I just like American football.”

His thick British accent and qualifying “football” as “American” was enough of a tip-off, even for the twins.

“You from the U.K.?” Sharon said, drooping and draping her body over her seat rest, upholstering his view with twins.



“Yes, I’m from London.”

“Cool,” Sharon said. “We’d like to go to Wembley Stadium to see a NFL game if the Seahawks ever play there.”

“Yeah,” Sandy chimed in. “Can we stay with you?”

“Definitely not,” he retorted, without missing a beat. “Not from what I’ve heard about you two.”

The twins giggled and climbed back into their seats. It was an observation — a rush to judgement — they were familiar with. When Sharon won a bag of red licorice for giving the correct answer³ to the Super Bowl trivia contest on the West Jet flight to Phoenix, the guy sitting next to Sandy deadpanned, “Oh great. More sugar.”

2. *Far Less Famous Than We Oughtta Be* (the twins’ football friends) blogger Marty even refused to call the Patriots by name, feeling that it was insult to American patriots. Instead, he called the New England team the Cheatin’ S-O-Bs.

3. Which city has hosted the Super Bowl the second-most times: New Orleans

Super Bowl Sighs ...

As the last Patriot reveller clambered onto the bus, the two sisters looked out the window towards the University of Phoenix Stadium. Outside, the walls of the stadium were lit like neon billboards. Lighted archways and bright stars stuck to the clear sky palette intimating that the fireworks had not really ended.

“You know, even though we lost, it was a remarkable season and an exceptional Super Bowl,” Sandy said. “I can’t wait for next season.”

“Me too,” Sharon said. “I thought last year’s Super Bowl was

magical. And it was, but this one was just as great. We are so lucky.”

“Yeah,” Sandy said. “We had so much fun with the horses again. And our seats! Man, if Wynn hadn’t given us those seats, it wouldn’t have been as exciting. And we definitely would not have seen the Baldwins again or seen Dougie B.”

“Yes,” Sharon sighed pensively. “Thank goodness for Wynn.” She looked down at her lap, her hotdog-bloated stomach stencilled with Baldwin’s #89-emblazoned jersey. “Yes, I’m definitely going to name our (imaginary) baby, Wynn.”

□



Sitting on the Dock of the Golf Course? — **The twins’ friends** Julie and Mark Walmsley from Victoria, like many others, took advantage of a bonanza housing market during the dying days of the U.S. recession that blew prices down like a desert wind before a storm.

For the recently-retired Walmsleys, Goodyear, (yes, named after the tire company) **Arizona was their “winter home” and playground. The couple had their so-called “retiring” days chock-full with a tiring schedule of activities – golf, swimming, Zumba, running, hiking, cycling – with facilities in their gated community rivalling those of much more affluent neighbourhoods back home. Above, Sharon takes a break from hearing about picture-taker Sandy’s sad attempts at Zumba-ing at Julie’s class that morning. “No one should have to see that,” Sharon thought.**



Can’t Get Enough of The Twins Adventures?

Beat the Christmas Rush. Need something for that hard-to-buy-for-person or for your own guilty pleasure? The Twin Chronicles are available on-line. Follow the twins at the Tour de France (France and Croatia Chronicles), Ironman, Canucks Stanley Cup Finals, Seahawks at home, away and at the Super Bowl (twice), or their visit to a brothel in Nevada. Email Sharon.white@telus.net Void where prohibited by law or good taste.

Official Swag Count

- Abandoned Plastic Cup

Stillman Station — Legacy of Love



“These two must be a real disappointment to you,” the twins’ friend Julie joked to their Aunt Pat, her Scottish lilt untamed by years of living in Canada and now, living part time in the United States.

Julie was picking up the twins for the last two days of their Phoenix trip, thereby “relieving” Aunt Pat from her gracious hospitality duties. “We’re right here!” Sandy and Sharon thought as they followed their friend’s eyes over the display of framed photos and memorabilia which wallpapered Aunt Pat’s hallway. Patricia (their maternal aunt) and their late uncle Guy Stillman were one of Scottsdale’s most prominent couples — a distinction exhibited on the wall with glamorous photos of the couple — the striking Patricia and the southern gentleman Guy with Scottsdale’s upper crust.

Guy’s father, James Stillman was the president of the National City Bank of New York and after his mother Anne divorced his father, she remarried Fowler McCormick, the last remaining grandson

of John D. Rockefeller. Fowler's Grandfather was Cyrus McCormick, the inventor of the reaper, which changed forever the way the world harvested grain. In his own right,

Guy Stillman had an impressive history that included an extensive military and civic service career. The hallway walls displayed framed certificates of military naval appointments by Presidents John F. Kennedy, Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson and graced photos of Guy and Patricia with some of the nation’s and state’s community leaders.

“When was this taken?” Sharon asked her aunt, pointing to a signed photo of the couple with President Ronald Reagan.

“Oh when we were at the White House,” Patricia said with the nonchalance of someone describing running into a friend at the corner store. Aunt Pat was good friends with Nancy Reagan’s mother, Edith Davis, a former Broadway actress who lived in Phoenix before her death in 1987.

“She was a character,” Patricia reminisced.

“Whenever she went to the White House, staff would assign someone to accompany her because the Reagans were never sure what would come out of her mouth.”

Guy Stillman’s most enduring legacy was his passion for trains. The McCormick family donated a 100-acre parcel of land — the McCormick Ranch — to the city in the 1970s and Stillman turned 30 acres of that land into the McCormick Stillman Railroad Park. This railroad-theme park featured a Pullman train car used by Presidents Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Eisenhower as well as a replica “*Paradise & Pacific Railroad*” which Guy had built for his six children on his ranch. Walt Disney had once offered to buy this railroad, but Stillman insisted on keeping it in Scottsdale and donating it to the railroad theme park.

Patricia continued to give Julie a tour of her rancher apartment — an expedition kept short and crowded as she was in the midst of moving to another house. Aunt Pat treated houses like being engrossed in a beloved book, each room molded and modelled as separate chapters, adorned by her artistic flair and her exquisite paintings and artwork, a pastime she had only started after turning 50. Perched on a hallway pedestal and under a sculptured Stetson hat was a bust of Guy that Patricia had lovingly crafted



PRECIOUS CARGO? SHARON AND JULIE ALL ABOARD.

— a replica also a permanent fixture in the McCormick Stillman Railroad Park. Her new house, a few miles away was a sprawling 10-bedroom and nine bathroom home with a guest house. Both were being renovated, with fixtures and furniture wandering into the house as each room took shape — or as each piece of furniture gave it shape. Inside, an impossibly-large and exquisite table was centred in a dining room that looked like it could only be built around it. Outside, was a gorgeous patio with a pool, a metallic sculpture horse and garden furniture recliners just waiting for Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan. □

Jack Knox: Love conquers all for Seahawks twin twelfies

JACK KNOX TIMES COLONIST

FEBRUARY 1, 2015

This is a real imaginary love story. Or something like that.

Victoria twin sisters Sharon White and Sandy McClary are diehard Seattle Seahawks fans. White even has C-HAWK license plates on her car.

So when the Seahawks sent receiver Doug Baldwin to Victoria for a July 2013 meet-and-greet, the twins were all over it. The TC's Bruce Stotesbury photographed the three of them together at the Strathcona Hotel.

(Too bad the team didn't send receiver Sidney Rice, because then we could say Sharon was there like White on Rice. But I digress.)

"We love the Seahawks," McClary told Baldwin.

"I love Seahawk fans," replied Baldwin, which White translated as: "He loves me."

"Are you going to be in New York in February?" asked White, referring to the Super Bowl. "Because we plan to be."

"I absolutely will be," replied Baldwin, which White translated as: "You and I are going on a date in New York City."

Baldwin then noted that White's name was printed on her jersey, and that it bore the number 45. "Asking for my name and number," White thought. "He's totally checking me out." (Her sister, on the other hand, thought Baldwin was collecting info for a restraining order.)

Anyway, off the twins went, with Baldwin's autograph now adorning their jerseys. White also cropped her sister out of Stotesbury's photo so that what remained looked like a pic of a happy couple, which she kept on her phone and showed to anyone willing to hear about her upcoming date with Baldwin.

Sure enough, Baldwin and the Seahawks qualified for the Super Bowl, and the twins set off for New York, where even in the pre-game carnival-like atmosphere their matching outfits — Seahawks sweaters on top, inflatable horse costumes on bottom — stood out. (Coming across the horses in their luggage, a U.S. border guard deadpanned: "What you do in your personal life is your business. I'm not



here to judge.” “Actually, you kind of are,” replied White, nodding to his badge.)

Strolling (cantering?) around Manhattan, the twins drew a crowd. They ended up on NFL.com, in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, on Canadian, U.S. and Australian TV, and posed for photos with a gazillion passersby, including ex-coach Mike Ditka and Drew Brees, their favourite non-Seahawk quarterback.

At one point, a 12-year-old kid came up — looking, they assumed, for a picture. No, he had spotted the Baldwin autograph on McClary’s jersey. “I’m Devon, his little brother,” he said.

This prompted McClary to pick up and shake the boy. “YOU’RE DOUG BALDWIN’S BROTHER?”

Then she tossed him to White, who also held him with his feet dangling over the sidewalk: “YOU’RE DOUG BALDWIN’S BROTHER?”

Yes, he was, and the woman who wondered why these strange she-horses were tossing her son around like a beach ball was his mother.

White, resisting the urge to lift up the diminutive woman and scream, “YOU’RE DOUG BALDWIN’S MOM,” instead fished out her iPhone and showed Cindy Baldwin the sister-cropped-out photo with the Seahawks receiver: “Don’t we make a cute couple?”

“Well, yes you do,” replied Cindy, playing along as White told her future mother-in-law the story of her “real imaginary thing” with the Seahawk. More photos were taken.

“I love people with a sense of humour,” McClary heard Cindy say as the Baldwin family moved off.

“I’ll see you at the wedding,” White called as they disappeared.

An extended version of all this has been documented in a lengthy newsletter sent by the sisters to their friends, who live vicariously through their (mis)adventures in such destinations as the Tour de France (booked a reservation in March for a hotel that had burned down in February), Croatia (black market accommodations above a massage parlour), and the Seattle marathon (which they missed when the hotel forgot their wake-up call).

We tell the tale today, of course, because A) the Seahawks are back in the Super Bowl and B) it shows how passionate many Victorians are about the team. The twins are just two of the local fans who are in Arizona for the game (hope Tom Brady doesn’t deflate their horses).

As Cleve Dheensaw writes on page D4, Seahawk Nation recognizes no border. As in all relationships — real or imaginary — we may have our differences, but love conquers all. □

March 2, 2015 (follow-up)

Remember Sharon White, the Victoria woman who spun a 2013 promotional-event encounter with Seattle Seahawk Doug Baldwin into a tongue-in-cheek “romance” with the receiver? By sheer chance, White and her twin sister, Sandy McClary, bumped into Baldwin’s mother, brother and uncle on a New York street before the 2014 Super Bowl, so they took the opportunity to introduce themselves to their “future in-laws.” Everyone had a good laugh. Fast forward to last month’s Super Bowl, where the sisters had great seats in the end zone — as did Baldwin’s family. “Hey, it’s the twins,” said the receiver’s little brother, recognizing the pair. Baldwin himself spotted the sisters in their No. 89 jerseys — his number — before the game. “He looked up, bumped his fist to his chest and pointed to us,” Sharon says. “Sandy said he was pointing to his number but I know he was pointing to his heart.” Can’t fight fate. □

Far More Famous Than They Oughtta Be...

"*Omigawd*," the twins gasped crouching over Aunt Pat's computer looking at the twin media frenzy they had left behind.

"We were there for an hour and *THAT'S* what they went with?" Sharon said, horrified as she watched herself brush her hand over her body (Sandy mimicking her motion with twin telepathic timing) and saying, "No one wants to see *THIS* naked."

No, Sharon wasn't planning to bare her (body and) soul to the TV cameras. She was just answering *CHEK TV* Sports anchor Jeff King's question about whether the two had plans to do something crazy and run naked onto the Phoenix Stadium field at halftime.

Sandy, watching this unfold on TV, thought, "Well, her date calendar is going to fill up fast."

It all had started innocently enough. The twins received an email from Jack Knox, (Victoria) *Times Colonist* columnist and a phone call from King. Both had wanted to go to the twin well for Super Bowl "local angle" stories.

Contrary to popular belief (and what previous *Chronicles* have chronicled) Sandy and Sharon did not like being media darlings. But the twins enjoyed Knox's humour and the "local angle" he proposed had deep roots in the *Times Colonist* (see article on p. 22). The twins knew Jack from previous media connections (he had once run their mayoralty bid "platform" in his column and last summer, running into him at Mattick's Farm, Sharon had showed him the photo of the "happy couple."

The *CHEK TV* "scoop" came from Sandy learning that Jeff King was going to Super Bowl XLIX.



"SMELLS LIKE TWIN SPIRIT" AT JOHN AND JULIE'S ANNUAL SUPER BOWL PARTY

"You are going to have a blast," Sandy emailed him, along with the *Super Bowl Chronicles*. "We did." She also told him that they didn't want to be on TV, but was good friends with Joni Marcolin (*CHEK's* head cameraperson).

So when Jeff got both their phone numbers from Joni — "You are going to love the twins," he told Jeff. "You are going to run out of film!" — Sandy had a bit of explaining to do to Sharon.

"What did you expect?" Sharon scolded Sandy. "You send him the *Chronicles* and you tell him you know Joni and then you are surprised when he calls us?"

"I told him we didn't want to be on TV. I just told him about Joni so he didn't think we were some kooks...strangers sending him the *Chronicles*. I was just excited that he was going to the Super Bowl and wanted to let him know how exciting it was," she explained.

"Okay," they agreed. "We'll just take our horses, get a few shots of us in Sharon's car, go in, get out."

Well the best laid plans were soon disrupted when the twins started telling Jeff and the weekend

cameraman all the *Chronicle* stories — they couldn't help themselves. Joni was right.

They took shots of the twins and the horses walking to the car and driving off and about an hour's worth of misadventures tales.

"You're getting all this?" Jeff, killing himself laughing said to his camera man.

"Yes," the camera man nodded, himself laughing.

The segment, however, left the horses on the clipping room floor but kept the naked reference as well as Sandy's lament about missing *The David Letterman Show* (though the clip did sound as she missed a guest appearance rather than a seat in the audience).

Sharon clicked to the *Times Colonist* photo — front page, colour, above the fold — and Jack Knox's column. "This is cool. It is a neat story how the photos launched a bizarre (even for us) chain of events," Sharon said, referring to the *Blitz and Me* front page photo, the *Dougie B. and Me* online photo and the reference to her commitment to Baldwin in an article (see *Super Bowl Chronicles*).

"But people know that I'm not just some crazed star-struck stalker, right? I mean, I was just having fun with the situation. I mean, I do know a thing or two about football," Sharon said. She did. She has followed football and the Hawks, er, like a hawk since she was a little girl and she refereed the game for more than 15 years.

"Nah. People won't think that," Sandy comforted her sister, while thinking, "Nope. She's not going to be on the market too much longer." □

Sharon's Super Bowl XLIX Predictions

1. Seahawks running back Marshawn Lynch scores. Confused, he grabs Patriots QB Tom Brady's crotch. Brady screeches (in falsetto), *"See? They're not deflated!!"*
2. The media hounds Coach Pete Carroll on the Seahawks' persistent problems getting their running game going. *"I have one word for you,"* he responds. *"E-X-L-A-X."*
3. Saanich Mayor Richard Atwell offers Bill Belichick advice on the not so lost art of using double and triple negatives to hide cheating – *"I have not been totally truthful in my efforts to be transparent and not to lie when I lied about...."* Belichick reciprocates by giving Atwell advice on detecting Spyware.
4. On Media Day, Marshawn Lynch and Bill Belichick hold a joint press conference. Neither will get a word in edgewise.
5. Tom Brady's Supermodel wife tweets, *"My husband can't be expected to throw, catch and deflate the ball."*
6. On an all-out safety blitz, Bam Bam Kam Chancellor leaps over the Patriots' offensive line in a single bound, only to trip over Brady's ego.
7. The Patriots organization gets in hot water over trademark laws when they call their ball boy, the 12th Man.
8. Tired of his nickname, The Gronk legally changes his name to Rob Hunkkowski. Tom Brady fumes, *"HEY!!! That's my nickname!"*
9. Excited, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie spontaneously hugs Coach Carroll and thinks, *"Finally! Someone who wants to be hugged!"* Carroll, not recognizing the Governor, wonders, *"What's with the guy in the Winnie the Pooh costume?"*
10. With just under two minutes left in the game, the Patriots lead 35-0. The Seahawks win in overtime. (Okay: Really got that one wrong)

